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Harford County Commission on Disabilities Annual Report FY 2005



David R. Craig
Harford County Executive
Mary F. Chance
Director, Department of Community Services

~ Preserving Harford's past; promoting Harford's future ~

Harford County Commission on Disabilities

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Working to Make the Dream of the Americans with Disabilities Act a Reality in Harford County October 24, 2005

On July 26, 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law by President George H.W. Bush. The ADA guarantees people with disabilities access to jobs, public accommodations, government services, public transportation, and telecommunications. The Commission on Disabilities celebrated the 15th Anniversary of the signing of the ADA with much pride and with the recognition that early disability rights advocates fought for legislation because they knew that civil rights do not come without the force of law. We know, however, that attitudes cannot be legislated. To change attitudes, we must educate and influence. Until every person with a disability who wants to work has a job, we have work to do. Until every person with severe disabilities who wants to live in the community rather than in a nursing home but remains in one, we have work to do. Until every person with a disability has the opportunity to fully participate in every aspect of our community, we have work to do.

The Commission on Disabilities proudly presents its Annual Report for FY2005 and invites all Harford County citizens to help us change attitudes. All of us, those with and without disabilities, can do this in our community.

- We can hire a qualified person with a disability. If we don't have that power, we can mentor a person with a disability who is looking for a job or who is a co-worker.
- We can befriend a neighbor with a disability and include him or her in community activities.
- The self-advocates among us can share their experiences and advocate for programs and services that empower them and others with disabilities.
- And, we can get involved with the legislative process.

We can all play a part in helping to make the dream of the ADA a reality. The public is invited to join us at our meetings on the fourth Monday of each month at 5:00 p.m. at the historic "Bel Air Colored High School", 205 South Hays Street in Bel Air and to visit our web page at <http://www.harfordcountymd.gov/services/disabilities> . For more information, please call 410-638-3373 voice/TTY or email disability@co.ha.md.us.

Buddy Green
Chairperson

Laurie A. Kwiedorowicz
Vice-Chairperson

Striving for a Better Way of Life for Harford County Citizens with Disabilities



Vision: Harford County citizens, with and without disabilities, are provided equal opportunities to participate in all community activities.

Mission: The Commission will advocate and act as a catalyst for positive change for citizens with disabilities by assessing needs, investigating opportunities for improvements in quality of life and supporting community participation.

Core Values:

- We are advocates for all individuals with disabilities in Harford County and we work to address issues facing those individuals.
- We are an information source for individuals with disabilities in Harford County.
- We are vigilant concerning disability-related legislative matters at the local, state, and federal level, providing comments and recommendations as may be appropriate.
- We focus on promoting full accessibility to public accommodations, educational opportunities, housing, and transportation within Harford County.

Membership

The Harford County Commission on Disabilities consists of 16 members, appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council, and additional non-voting members. Commission members who served during FY 2005:

- Five county citizens with disabilities;
Deborah A. Braam, Bel Air
Robert L. Coen, Street
Bluett (Buddy) C. Green, Jr., Chair, Baldwin
Stacey L. Hull, Forest Hill
Joan Loftus, Bel Air
- Student Representative:
Rhia S. Perry, Joppatowne High School
- A member of the County Council appointed by the Council
Dion Guthrie, District A.
- Two family members of individuals with disabilities;
Gilbert F. Kennedy, III, Bel Air
Marc A. Weinstein, Belcamp
- One county citizen who owns or operates a local business or who is an employee of a local business, recommended by the Harford County Chamber of Commerce;
Keith A. Lewis, Forest Hill
- Two county citizens with an interest in assisting individuals with disabilities;
Laurie A. Kwiedorowicz, Vice-chairperson, White Hall
Angela D. Barnett, Aberdeen

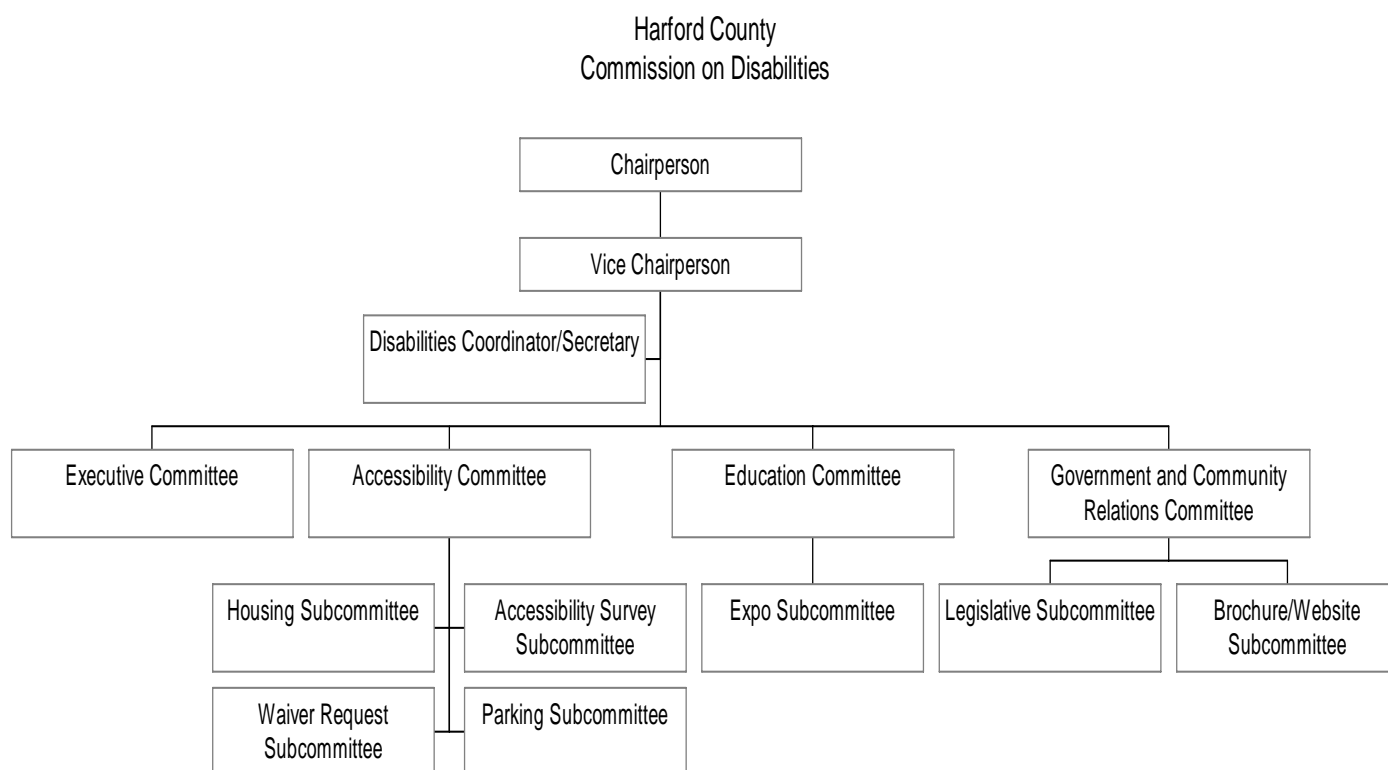
- Four individuals representing agencies serving individuals with disabilities.
Susan F. Austin, Harford County Public Schools,
Office of Special Education
Michael J. Drummond, Core Service Agency
Carol E. Roughton, Division of Rehabilitation Services, Bel Air Office
Michael D. Watkins, Harford County Department of Parks and Recreation

Associate Members (non-voting)
Kevin Racine, Havre de Grace



*Outgoing Commissioner Carol Roughton at festivities in honor of her retirement.
at the June 27, 2005 Commission on Disabilities meeting.
Vice-chairperson Laurie Kwiedorowicz presented Carol with a silver box engraved with
the dates of her Commission membership, 1995-2005, in recognition of her efforts as
one of the founding members of the Harford County Commission on Disabilities.*

Organization Chart



In 2005, the Commission conducted its work through the following standing committees:

Executive Committee: The Executive Committee meets on an as needed basis in order to facilitate the flow of information to Commission members and to prepare recommendations for the consideration of and appropriate action by the full Commission. The Executive Committee also provides recruitment activities to assure that all Commission vacancies are filled in a timely manner.

Government and Community Relations Committee: This committee serves as a link between the community and the Commission by reviewing, monitoring, and supporting disability-related legislation and working to enhance communication.

- **Brochure/Website Subcommittee:** The Commission added two new features to its web page in 2005. The “Spotlight on Services” highlights the work of a different local service provider on a monthly basis and provides contact information for interested individuals with disabilities. “Submit an Event” provides nonprofit agencies the opportunity to advertise disability-focused events on the Commission’s calendar of events. The Commission’s web address is www.harfordcountymd.gov/services/disabilities.
- **The Legislative Subcommittee:** The Commission, along with the disability community throughout the State of Maryland, supported and celebrated the

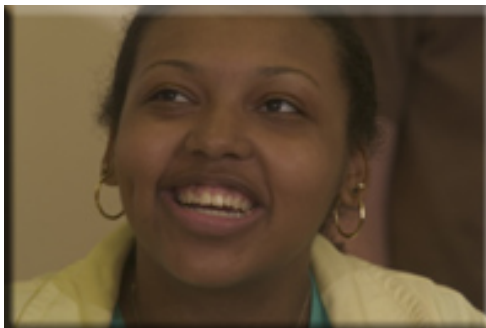
elevation of the Governor's Office for Individuals with Disabilities to cabinet-level status. The Commission was proud to welcome Secretary Kristen Cox of the Maryland Department of Disabilities at its September 27, 2004 meeting.



Commission Chairperson Buddy Green greets Secretary Kristen Cox of the Maryland Department of Disabilities

The Commission reviewed and monitored approximately 42 legislative proposals during the 2005 Maryland Legislative Session and participated in advocacy through the Maryland Alliance of Local Commissions and Committees on Disabilities. In 2005, the Commission introduced its Legislative Guide, which provided Harford County citizens with disabilities the opportunity to participate in the legislative process through its web page. Links to disability-related legislation before the Maryland General Assembly, contact information on elected officials, and opinions and viewpoints of a variety of disability advocacy organizations are also available through the Legislative Guide. The Legislative Guide is available at <http://www.harfordcountymd.gov/services/disabilities/links.cfm#legislative>.

- Local Selection Subcommittee for the Maryland Youth Leadership Forum. This year's delegate to the Maryland Youth Leadership Forum, held July 19 – 22, 2005 was Student Representative to the Commission, Rhia S. Perry, a student at Joppatowne High School.



Student Representative Rhia Perry, the Harford County Delegate to the 2005 Maryland Youth Leadership Forum

- Citizen Review Board: Commissioners Robert Coen, Michael Drummond, and Carol Roughton served on the County's Community Development Review Board for FY2005, which reviewed applications for grant funding from nonprofit agencies and made recommendations to the County Executive.

Accessibility Committee: This committee works to ensure that all aspects of life in Harford County are accessible to citizens with disabilities.

- Housing Subcommittee: "Affordable and accessible housing" was identified as a priority need category in the Harford County Consolidated Plan FY 2003-2007. The Commission, through the Housing Subcommittee, engaged in the following activities to support the goal:

The Commission's Ramps for Renters and Homeowners Program, funded by the Community Development Block Grant program, will provide ramps for low-income homeowners and renters. For more information call 410-638-3373 voice/TTY or email disability@harfordcountymd.gov.

Commissioner Gil Kennedy is serving as Chair of the strategic planning committee of the Housing Coalition of Harford County. The strategic planning committee is working to develop goals, direction and appropriate membership for the coalition.

- Accessibility Survey Subcommittee: Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits public entities from discrimination against or excluding people from programs, services, or activities on the basis of disability. In order to ensure that Harford County Government facilities are accessible to citizens with disabilities, the Commission conducted two accessibility surveys completed in 2000 and in 2003. The Commission has shifted its focus to correction of architectural barriers identified in the survey. A summary of completed and proposed ADA projects follows:

Harford County Circuit Court: signage, handrail, basic accessibility upgrades completed 2005; accessibility upgrades to the restrooms on level B and Jury Room restrooms on levels 2 and 3 to be completed in FY 2006.

Liriodendron: accessibility upgrades to the entrance and restroom are proposed for FY 2006.

Parks and Recreation facilities: accessibility upgrades to the following facilities completed in 2005: multipurpose courts at Deerfield and Edgewood Elementary Schools, Forest Hill Recreation Complex, Havre de Grace Middle School, Francis Silver Park, and Fallston High School; Robert Copenhaver Park; Edgewood Recreation Community Center; Flying Point Park; and Edgewood Park. Twelve sets of accessible bleachers were installed countywide and in partnership with

the Harford County Public Schools and respective PTAs, playgrounds at Bel Air and Meadowvale Elementary Schools were renovated with accessibility features.

- Waiver Request Subcommittee: This subcommittee functions as the “designated disability advisory group” in the Waiver Request Process as defined by the Maryland Accessibility Code. Members of the subcommittee work with Harford County Department of Licensing, Inspections, and Permits personnel to review requests for waiver of the Maryland Accessibility Code and to provide the perspective of the disability community on the impact of the requested waiver.

Education Committee: This committee conducts disability awareness events and presentations. The committee’s premier event, the Expo for Individuals with Disabilities is planned for Saturday, March 18, 2006 at the New Life Center of the Mountain Christian Church in Joppa. The Expo Planning Committee began working with the Commission’s partners, the Harford County Public Schools Office of Special Education, and the Arc Northern Chesapeake Region to plan the event.

In 2005, the Commission on Disabilities provided seven presentations on disability-related topics to a total of 221 individuals. Commission members also appeared on Harford Cable Network public affairs programs discussing accessible, parking, housing and other disability-related topics.

Transportation: Commissioners Joan Loftus and Marc Weinstein, Associate Commission member Kevin Racine, and Disabilities Coordinator Sharon Grzanka serve on the Harford County Transportation Steering Committee. In addition to receiving a \$49,820.00 Systems Change Grant from the Division of Rehabilitation Services, the steering Committee worked on the implementation phase of the Strategic Plan for Transportation Services for Persons with Disabilities, which included:

- A subscription bus service that provides transportation to day programs and community employment for individuals with disabilities. The service has been running since January 2005 and provides an average of 25+ trips daily.
- Travel training for individuals with disabilities provided by Mobility Trainer/Coordinator Cheryl Gable, 443-617-0630 or clgable@harfordcountymd.gov. Individuals who may never have used public transportation are now using Harford Transit to travel to work.
- Disability awareness/sensitivity training provided to Harford Transit drivers.



The work of the steering committee continues with plans to involve human service agency vehicles in a transportation coordination project. The steering committee is also planning to submit an application to the Easter Seals Project Action Mobility Planning Institute, April 22-25, 2006 in Washington, DC.

Action Plan for 2006

- To promote improved enforcement of existing laws relating to disability issues.
- To promote full accessibility of all County facilities and activities.
- To promote full accessibility of public accommodations.
- To provide opportunities for community education on disability issues and to continue to maintain and expand partnerships within the community.
- To be recognized as the voice of the disability community in Harford County.ⁱ

ⁱ**This document is available in alternative format upon request.
410-638-3373 voice/TTY or email disability@co.ha.md.us.**